

BECOMING ALL SAINTS

All Saints Lutheran Church Congregation Development & Education

Is There Hope for All Saints?

A MESSAGE FROM THE TRANSITION AND CALL COMMITTEES

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

In *Becoming All Saints Part 2*, we shared some disheartening and negative information about signs and symptoms of a dying church. We saw All Saints in many of those and hope you did, too. Why do we want you to see All Saints' signs of dying? For the future.

All Saints is a church of hope. It is a church of inspiration. A church of love. It will also be a church with closed doors in the future if we don't adapt to the needs of our community and serve those that surround us instead of only those within our beloved sanctuary each Sunday. Jesus calls on us to love our neighbors, look after orphans and widows, give to anyone who has need, and get uncomfortable in order to serve others.

As we go through this transition in the midst of a pandemic that has stopped us from worshipping as a physical body of Christ, we have experienced that our church doesn't exist within walls. It exists within our homes, our networks, and ourselves. Even with our worship services limited, All Saints continues to "dispense hope" to others through our online services and our outreach ministries that have not stopped. We still feed the hungry, we still collect items for those in need, we still provide financial support for a family of Christians that call All Saints their church home. God's work continues and we must keep pursuing that which He plans for us. We have to ask, "Are we doing all we can? Or, are we doing that which makes us comfortable and checks a box?"

Moving forward, we must continue to take an "honest audit" of how our members take their time being involved and how we spend All Saint's money. As we look towards leadership of ministries, we need to continue to maintain and serve in our outreaches that are strong and effective. We need to make specific plans to minister and evangelize to our always changing community. Last, we need to lift and support our new pastor when he or she joins us. We don't want to discourage or create disillusion that would cause a new pastor to part ways. Instead, we want to bring forth positive intentions for a long lasting relationship that will be part of All Saint's revitalization.

So yes, there is absolutely hope. It comes from God, and as the Body of Christ, we are compelled to dispense that hope amongst one another through word and action.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Scripture to Study and Contemplate

LISTENING AND DOING (JAMES 1: 19-27)

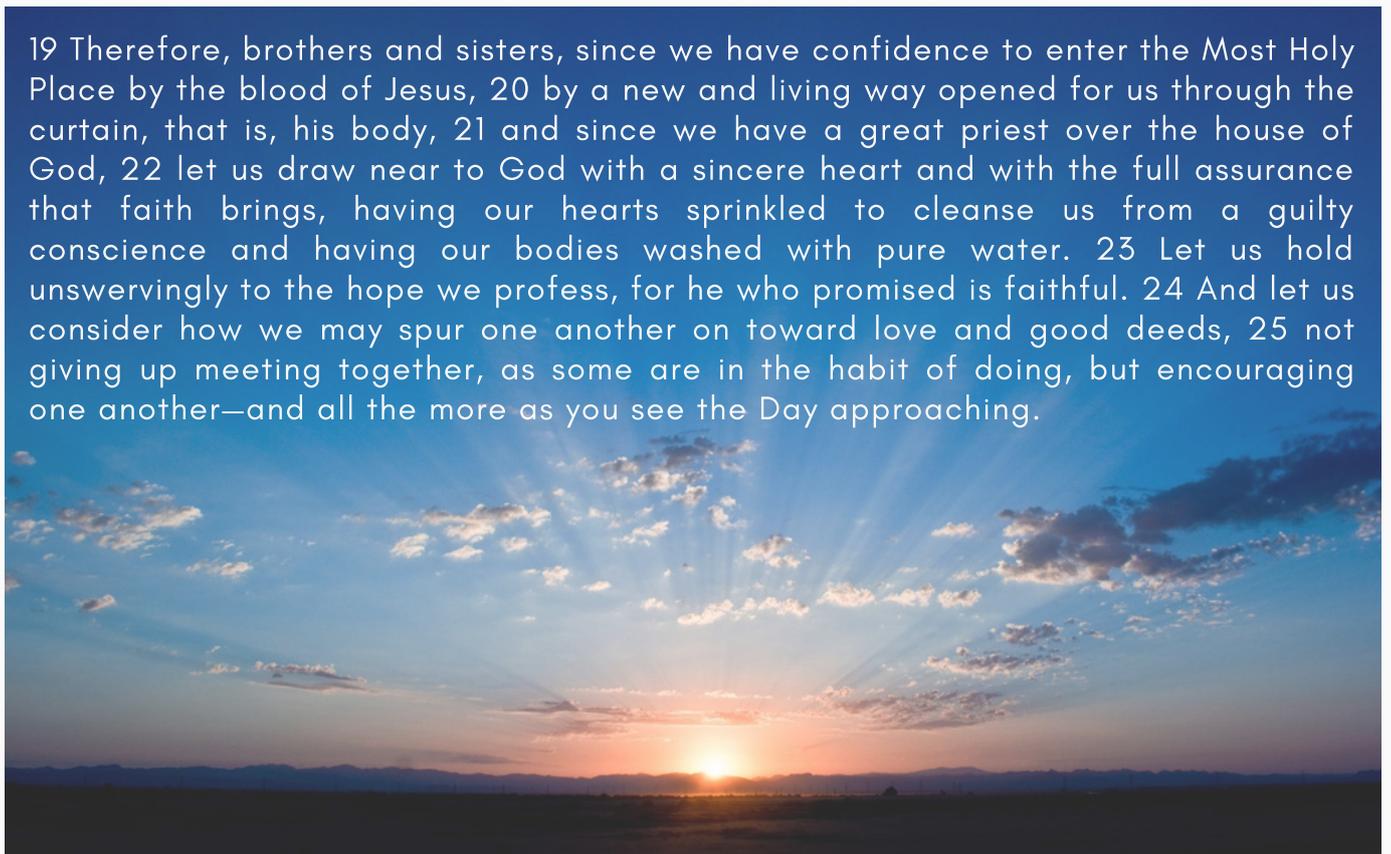
19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. 22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. 26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE BELIEVERS (ACTS 2: 42-47)

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

A CALL TO PERSEVERE IN FAITH (HEBREWS 10: 19-25)

19 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.



IS THERE HOPE FOR THE DYING CHURCH?

Thom S Rainer

"These are no magical, easy-fix solutions. The responses I offer... are not a recipe to create or repair the perfect church. To the contrary, they are more of a cry to God to intervene, and to create a willingness on the part of the church members to be obedient. It's serious stuff. It's sobering."

At the risk of redundancy, please hear that these are not quick-fix solutions. They are major categorical responses that must be adapted for each church."

- **The church must admit and confess its dire need.** Most churches move toward death because they refuse to acknowledge their condition. Sometimes a single leader will be used by God to move the church in this positive direction.
- **The church must pray for wisdom and strength to do whatever is necessary.** The change will not be easy.
- **The church must be willing to change radically.** Frankly, this is usually the point of greatest resistance. The church has to change decades of cumulative problem behaviors in a very short time.
- **That change must lead to action and outward focus.** When a church begins to act positively with this radical change, it has essentially become a new church.
- **Pray that God will open the eyes of the leadership and members for opportunities to reach into the community where the church is located.** Jesus told His followers in Jerusalem just before His ascension that they were to be witnesses: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The first mandate is to impact your local community. Most churches with symptoms of sickness have become more inwardly focused.
- **Take an honest audit of how church members spend their time being involved.** In most of these churches, the members are involved in ministries for themselves, often to the exclusion of ministries beyond the church. The church loses outward momentum when the members start forming holy huddles.
- **Take an honest audit of how the church spends its money.** Again, as churches become ill, they are more likely to use funds for their own members rather than reaching their community. Balance is the key, and most of these churches is out of balance.
- **Make specific plans to minister and to evangelize your community.** You have prayed about it, you have honestly evaluated your time in programs and ministry, and how the church spends its funds. Now is the time to develop specific and concrete plans to impact the community.

"Rarely does a church move from the category of "symptoms of sickness" to "very sick" overnight. It's more of a continuum. That is why it's so hard to detect and to respond if you're close to the church. From one day to the next, nothing seems to change. But there is an underlying deterioration taking place. Without intervention, the situation only gets worse..."

And if the church waits until it's very sick, it is extremely difficult to get better."



All Saints is between symptoms of sickness and very sick based on the notable signs from *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Where we go from here isn't dependent on a new pastor, the staff, or the community seeking out our church. It is dependent on church members and leadership to make steps forward and choose to pray, evaluate, and take action for positive change.

We can, and must, come together to radically impact our community.



The Life Cycle of Pastors

Thom S Rainer

Almost twenty years ago, I began to note that the tenure of a pastor often follows a predictable pattern. Now, almost two decades later, I still see many of the same patterns, though I have refined the categories and time spans a bit. I fully understand that these categories are not definitive, and there will certainly be exceptions to the rule. Nevertheless, I offer this lifecycle as a guide that I hope will prove useful to both pastors and congregations alike.

Honeymoon: Years 0 to 1

The new pastor is perceived to be the answer to all the needs and the problems of the church. He is often viewed as a hero because he is not his predecessor. Though some of his faults begin to show during this period, he is often given a pass. Expectations are high that he will be molded into the image that each congregant would like to have.

Crisis: Years 1 to 3

It is now apparent that the pastor is fully human. He has not lived up to the precise expectations of many of the members. This phase includes a number of conflicts and struggles. Indeed it is the most common time that pastors choose to leave the church or they are force terminated. This single epoch of a pastoral tenure contributes more to short tenures than any other time.

Realignment: Years 3 to 5

The number of crises begins to abate, though they do not disappear altogether. It is at this time that more and more new members come under the tenure of the new pastor. Some of the dissidents have left the church or the community. There is a realignment of loyalty and expectations of the pastor. Thus he is able to lead more effectively, and began to see some more productive years as pastor of the church.

Growth: Years 5 to 10

Not all pastors have productive and joyous ministries in this period, but many do. It is not unusual for the congregation to begin to appreciate the pastor more and to follow his leadership with greater enthusiasm. Many of the battles have already been fought; and many of the conflicts have been resolved. The pastor and the entire congregation are ready to move forward in more productive ministry for the glory of God.

Mystery: Years 10 and Beyond

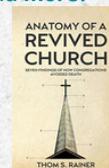
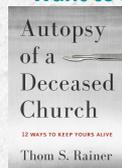
There are relatively few pastors and congregations that continue their relationships beyond a period of one decade. Thus any perspective I have of long-term pastorates is inconclusive and limited. I am confident, however, that if we see more and more pastors entering their tenth year of ministry and beyond, we will see more productive and fruitful ministries in local churches across the nation.

https://churchanswers.com/blog/the_lifecycle_of_pastors/

Why we want you to know about Pastoral tenure:

Pastors are not silver bullets for a church's problems. We impact how a pastoral relationship grows through the years as a congregation and as individual members. If we start our relationship with a negative attitude and begin comparing them to our previous pastors from All Saints or other churches, we set him or her up to fail. If we embrace with open hearts and minds for the calling they are being led to, we will reap the benefits as a congregation and as individuals in growing our faith. We will continue to explore and discuss our roles as members in future series of *Becoming All Saints*.

Want to read more?



These are the four books by Thom S. Rainer we will be referencing:

[*Autopsy of a Deceased Church*](#)

[*Anatomy Of A Revitalized Church*](#)

[*Becoming A Welcoming Church*](#)

[*I Am A Church Member: Discovering the Attitude that Makes the Difference*](#)

The Prayerful Commitment

"AND PRAY IN THE SPIRIT ON ALL OCCASIONS WITH ALL KINDS OF PRAYERS AND REQUESTS. WITH THIS IN MIND, BE ALERT AND ALWAYS KEEP ON PRAYING FOR ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE."

EPHESIANS 6:18

At the end of each chapter of Autopsy of a Deceased Church, readers are asked a simple question:
"Will you make a prayerful commitment?"

Rainer says, "The commitment is really between you and God. Perhaps God will raise up an army of church members who are no longer satisfied with business as usual. The trauma of observing an autopsy is only beneficial if it is received as a warning to the living. This book is not about dwelling on the past, but bearing fruit in the future. The prayer commitment in each chapter is a positive challenge to take the hill so to speak, where others may have failed. The commitments are vital in this book. Because if we heed the warnings of the autopsy, we stand to benefit far greater than we could otherwise imagine." We encourage our congregation to use these as daily prayers. The first seven were in Part 2. Commitments 8-14 are below.

Prayerful Commitment Eight

God, please give our pastor a heart and a vision to reach and minister to people beyond our own walls. Teach me to be the kind of church member who encourages and supports our pastor, so discouragement and disillusionment does not lead to departure.

Prayerful Commitment Nine

Lord, teach me to pray. Teach me to pray consistently. Teach me to be a leader in prayer in my church. And teach me to keep passionate and believing prayer as the lifeblood of this church.

Prayerful Commitment Ten

God, reignite the hearts of our church members, including me, to have a passion for the gospel. Teach our church to share the gospel with others. Teach us to live as men and women who are true bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ. Remind us of our purpose. Convict us of our purpose. Empower us to live our purpose.

Prayerful Commitment Eleven

Lord, teach me the proper stewardship of all the material items You give me personally and in my church. Help me never let that stewardship evolve into obsession and idolatry, especially where I lose my perspective on what really matters.

Prayerful Commitment Twelve

Lord, let me see my church with honesty and open eyes. Help me to grasp where we have gotten out of balance with inward and outward ministries. And give our church a vision to make a difference in our community. Even more, God, use me to be a catalyst and instrument for the changes that must take place in our church.

Prayerful Commitment Thirteen

I believe all things are possible through you, God. Show me what I need to do to lead my church from hopeless to hope. And give me the courage and strength to make those changes, even those changes that will be very painful.

Prayerful Commitment Fourteen

Lord, if it is Your will for our church to die or survive, please let me know. And give me the courage and the strength to let go or the will and commitment to work for its survival.
Make me a servant in the revitalization.
For Your Glory.

think...

talk...

pray.

Think about the following questions and take some time for self reflection. Talk about them with friends, family, or another church member. Pray about the questions and the answers and use them to guide you through the week.

- "A church cannot survive long-term where members are focused on their own preferences: My music style, my desired length and order of worship services, my desired color and design of buildings and rooms, my activities and programs, my need of ministers and staff, my, my, my." What are some unfortunately common areas where church members insist or demand their own preferences? Why do you think that happens?
- The Bible contains unlimited passages on the Christlike attitude all Christians should always have. What are some areas where you've had a tendency to push for your own preferences at All Saints? Read Phillipians 2:5-11. How can you work towards a self-sacrificial attitude like Christ when it comes to your preferences?
- Where does a sick church begin if its members and leaders truly desire reversal and revitalization? What sacrifices must be made? What comforts must be given up?
- Look at the *The Life Cycle of Pastors* and identify two stages that give you hope and two stages that make you concerned. How do you as a congregation member see yourself impacting those stages? Why is pastoral tenure important at All Saints in your opinion? Pray for a new pastor and their calling.
- Take time to truly evaluate each step of *Is There Hope For the Dying Church?* What can you do personally to be part of the forward steps needed for All Saints to reverse the symptoms of sickness and revitalize?

Pray for A New Pastor

Heavenly Father,
We thank you for being with us during this time of transition and leading us where you want us to go. Please guide the Call Committee to search for a pastor with a heart and a vision to reach and minister to people beyond our own walls. Help us to look past our own desires and expectations of what we think a pastor should be and help us to see Jesus in those you put before us as candidates. Only you truly know the heart of those you have called to serve in Your church.

In You, we find hope. In You, we believe. Amen.



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Call Committee Update

The Rocky Mountain Synod/ELCA presented us with four candidates for consideration. Three were three first call pastors and one pastor with experience as an associate pastor.

We have worked hard to interview candidates in a timely fashion. We meet following each candidate's interview and talk through the "strengths and stretches" of each candidate. We have also been listening to sermons and evaluating both sermon delivery as well as content/message of their sermons. This week, the candidate with most experience contacted us to remove her name from our candidacy as she was seriously considering a call from another church.

Following our consideration, we have asked one person for a second interview. We have also requested to receive more experienced candidates for consideration as well, and hope to receive names soon. We continue to need your prayers as we continue our work.

Please pray for us to be able to be listeners for God's voice calling us as we meet. Pray that we have discerning eyes to look within ourselves and see what God is seeing in the candidates as we meet with each person. Finally, we ask that you pray that members of the Call Committee continue to honor one another by keeping open minds, voicing our truth and listening with open hearts. In turn, we will be praying for All Saints, keeping the needs of congregation members mindful and praying for our community inside and outside of our walls.

We continue this process with hope and trust knowing God is with us.